



LOTTE NEW YORK PALACE



EXPRESS Home of
the Daily and
Sunday Express

A city that runs on adrenaline

New York's natural
Energy Sustains

INES WATSON

On a whirlwind tour
of the Big Apple

WHAT do you do if you have two days, a big city and a wish list as long as your arm? If the city is New York, then the advice from locals is to forget sleeping, fill up on caffeine and, well, go for it. Then again, if the city is New York artificial stimulants aren't really needed. After all, the buzz and vitality emanating from these streets is legendary. There is so much going on in this City That Never Sleeps, the only problem is deciding what to do amid the huge array of options. Manhattan has always been a magnet for British tourists – and Delta Air Lines' new direct flight from Edinburgh, with its outstanding service, is the canny choice for Scots who love big lights and big cities but not the tedium of connecting plane journeys. Shopping? Prices are good, they say, and many go there just for that as clothes, diamonds and electronics are often cheaper than here. Personally, I can think of nothing worse than spending my precious hours in a department store – but each to their own.

My problem was how to experience the essence of this great city in just two days.

There's the obvious places – Central Park and the Empire State Building and everyone told me to visit the Metropolitan Museum of Art – but with so little time, how to do it justice?

But, first, it is vital to find a hotel right in the heart of things... and that's the Lotte New York Palace. A classic hotel dating from the 1880s it has now been taken over by the Far Eastern Lotte family of hotels and given a refreshing new lease of life. Its enormous tower bedrooms offers views others pay a fortune to see and, whether you get a direct eyeful of the nearby art deco Chrysler Building or, as I did, a bird's eye view of the beautiful St Patrick's Cathedral just below me, its position on Madison Avenue cannot be rivaled. After a good night's sleep, it was exhilarating to wake up to the sight of the sun breaking over the skyscrapers, drink that coffee and go out for a walk.

Your average tourist may just decide to walk around Manhattan –and that's a fine choice – but, if you're a native New Yorker, the only place for a stroll these days is the ultra fashionable High Line. This raised urban walkway used to be a long disused railway track, called the West Side Line. When its weed-ridden dilapidated structure was due to be torn down, a concerted and vociferous community action group not only saved it but effected its transformation into an area which is part park and part art installation. Meandering above Chelsea and the old Garment District, it offers a delightful walk full of imagination and surprises at every turn. With great views over the city, you can leave or join it every few blocks. And if this arty saunter over the streets whets your appetite, then leave the High Line in the uber trendy Meatpacking District and visit the hipster's favourite, the Whitney Museum of American Art.

Begun in the 1930s by Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, who was herself a (fabulously wealthy) artist of note, this is the place to enjoy large iconoclastic works – both by renowned names like Andy Warhol and lesser known artists. It's an excellent way to experience what modern American art is all about. There's nothing like fresh air and culture to turn the thoughts to lunch so we then headed to Urban Space Vanderbilt. This covered food market, close to Grand



LOTTE NEW YORK PALACE

Central Terminal, is a joy. Casual and friendly, it has stalls of food from every country imaginable, with big wooden trestle tables to sit and enjoy them. Reasonably priced and cheerful, it is a great place to rest and watch the world go by for a while before taking another bite out of the Big Apple. If you're the efficient type, you'll already have purchased your New York City PASS. This will not only save you a fortune and enable you to dodge queues it also, if you are a bit of a novice, points you in the direction of the city's greatest hits. The Pass gives you nine days to work your way round great places like Ellis Island, the Guggenheim Museum and the Empire State Building – but I didn't even have nine hours. It was a hard choice but there's nothing like a little boat trip of an afternoon and so off I walked down Broadway to get myself on a Circle Line voyage around Manhattan. Not only does it give perspective to the whole island but seeing famous sites like the Statue of Liberty and Wall Street in a leisurely and unhurried way makes the whole experience a very pleasant and relaxed one. Of course, no visitor can remain unaware of the tragic events of September 11, 2001. A visit to the two massive dark pools of the 9/11 Memorial is a sombre and moving tribute to the thousands who died. Across the huge plaza, now home to 400 trees, is the astonishing One World Trade Centre. Rising above the tragedy it soars in optimistic defiance and a visit to it and the One World Observatory, at a height of 1,776 feet, is highly recommended. The next day it was time to turn my back on Manhattan and explore a very different place indeed – Brooklyn. Many think of it as a suburb of the "real" New York, where the residents talk a bit funny and are very likely to have links with the Mob. Well, take a tour like A Slice of Brooklyn and you'll find these preconceptions are spot on, though apparently the local gangsters have now been largely brought under control.

Think of Tony Manero swaggering down the street in Saturday Night Fever, the dark dealings of Goodfellas, the Brooklyn Bridge scenes in Annie Hall and many, many other movies. Not only will you actually see all these places, you get pizza too. And not just any old pizza, you will start off with Neapolitan-style at the famous Grimaldi's and end up with the rather strange Sicilian experience of L&B Spumoni Gardens – which was actually a bit too authentic, if that is possible. All this with a laugh-a-minute commentary and film clips from Marc, a born-and-bred Brooklynite who is very proud of his town and wants to show it off. Another joy was the famous Coney Island, with its surprisingly lovely beach and song-inspiring

(Under the) Boardwalk. With direct train links from Manhattan, this is the place to go when you are tired of pounding the city streets. Coney Island is a glimpse into the past of a true beach resort, largely unspoilt and beloved by the locals. So, two days gone and only a brief taste of what this fantastic city has to offer. But I'm not the only one with plans to return – Delta's Edinburgh route to JFK has proved so successful, a direct one from Glasgow starts in May next year. So what's stopping you? Book that ticket, down that coffee and get out there. The Big Apple has never been so close.

THE KNOWLEDGE Delta Air Lines'

year-round, non-stop service from
Edinburgh to New York – with
onward connections to the US
and Caribbean – operates daily
flights in the summer and five
times weekly in the winter.

Return economy fares start at
£429.27. Details: 0871 221 1222 or
www.delta.com

Room rates at the Lotte New
York Palace, Madison Avenue
start from \$380 a night for
Superior rooms and \$1,200 for a
Tower Corner suite.

For details of Brooklyn tours, see